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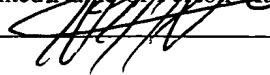


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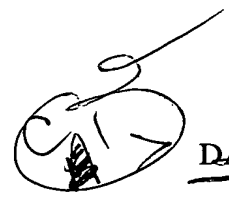
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PATENT APPLICATION

DATA STORAGE OPTIMIZATION METHOD

INVENTOR: MARK MARION

TECHNICAL FIELD

5 The present invention relates to a method for optimizing file structures stored on a memory device operatively associated with a computer. Particularly suited to optimizing individual resources within a given file to minimize seek and access time of the storage device, the present invention significantly improves execution speed of computer programs stored on CD-ROM disks.

BACKGROUND ART

10 Information used by programmable computers, including data and executable programs, are typically stored on some form of memory device. Each type of current art memory storage device presents the user with certain trade-offs regarding cost, speed of information retrieval, and capacity. Electronic memory devices, particularly random access memory (RAM), typically offer the user very fast data access. This high speed data access, however, is both limited in maximum capacity and expensive. Magnetic recording media, including tapes, diskettes, and magnetic
15 hard drives, present the user with somewhat slower access times, but are more cost effective than large electronic storage methodologies.

20 In order to transfer computer programs and data users, including software developers and marketers, have long shipped those programs and data on magnetic diskettes. These diskettes are typically inexpensive to procure, but have limited data storage capabilities. Large computer programs, for instance, which are shipped on magnetic media, typically require many diskettes to contain the entire program or

data set. The cost of recording many diskettes for each program sold is a cost factor which must be considered by a software developer or manufacturer.

5 In order to overcome the previously discussed limitations of storage capacity per diskette, the use of CD-ROM technology has gained wide acceptance in the software industry. Where a single 3.5" magnetic floppy diskette is capable of holding typically a maximum of 1.44 Mbyte, a single CD-ROM can typically hold upwards of 600 Mbytes of information. The previously discussed trade offs again apply, however, in that while CD-ROM production is very cost effective and the devices themselves hold large amounts of data, the access time to that data is
10 typically slower than that encountered on magnetic hard drives and much slower than data retrieval from electronic storage means.

The relatively slow access imposed by CD-ROM technology can translate to extremely long delays in program execution as the program accesses data which is randomly stored on the CD-ROM. In some resource intensive applications, for
15 instance computerized games, randomly storing data which is subsequently accessed by the program on CD-ROM, results in significant delay in program execution and adversely affects the game's playability.

Many applications, including the aforementioned computerized games, access the data files required for their execution in a non-random manner. Because there
20 is a degree of predictability to the access order of at least some of the data stored in the memory device, an automated methodology which would optimize the order in which the data was stored would result in significant improvements in program execution speed.

SUMMARY OF INVENTION

25 The present invention provides a method for optimizing the storage of data elements accessed by a computer application program. More particularly, the present invention is applicable to the optimizing of the storage of data elements or sub-files, hereafter referred to as "resources", within a file.

30 The automated methodology taught herein contains two principal programmatic elements which, in operative combination, optimize the storage order of resources within a given data file. The first element modifies one version of the application program so that a separate file is created, which lists each resource in

sequential order as it is accessed from the first version of the data file. The listing is by the resource type and identification number. The modified version of the application, or executable, program is referred to hereafter as the "Resource Optimizer", or "debug version". The list created by the Resource Optimizer, hereafter referred to as a "resource list", thus contains a sequential listing of the several resources of a given data file as they are accessed. The resource list does not contain the resource data itself. After the resource list is created, it is appended to the data file itself, as a separate resource, thus creating a second version of the data file.

After the resource list has been appended to the data file, the second programmatic element, typically a separate executable program and hereafter referred to as a "Resource Arranger" is then executed. The Resource Arranger accesses each file accessed by the executable program, and creates a third version of each data file having the several resources thereof, including the resource list, stored in resource list order.

Other features of the present invention are disclosed or apparent in the section entitled: "BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION."

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

For fuller understanding of the present invention, reference is made to the accompanying drawing in the following detailed description of the Best Mode of Carrying Out the Invention. In the drawing:

Fig. 1 is an overview of the operation of the present invention.

Fig. 2 is a data flow diagram of the Resource Optimizer code of the present invention.

Fig. 3 is a data flow diagram of the Resource Arranger code of the present invention.

Reference numbers refer to the same or equivalent parts of the present invention throughout the several figures of the drawing.

BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE PRESENT INVENTION

A given computer program, for instance, a computerized game, accesses one

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or more files, most of which contain a plurality of resources. By way of example, but not limitation, a computer game may access a file, e.g., OPN_SCREEN, which comprises a number of sound and graphics resources. When the file is created, the various resources stored therein are generally stored in the file in their creation order, i.e., the order in which they are created. It is seldom the case that this order is the order most optimally accessed by the executable program.

The first programmatic element of the present invention comprises a modification to the application program itself, hereafter referred to as the "debug" or "Resource Optimizer" version of the application program.

Referring now to Figure 1, the operation of the present invention is shown. Version 1 of data file 1 contains a plurality of sound and picture resources in some random order, e.g. their creation order. Each resource in data file 1, e.g.: SON 1001, is uniquely identified by its resource type 10, e.g. SON, in combination with its resource identification number 11, e.g. 1001. The Resource Optimizer, 2, when executed causes the creation of a resource list 3. Resource list 3 consists of a listing, by resource type and I.D. number, of each resource in the order in which each was accessed by the executable program. This listing is unique: i.e., a given resource is listed only once in the resource file. It should be noted that resource list 3 contains only resource identification information and no data. After forming resource list 3, Resource Optimizer 2 appends resource list 3 as a separate resource to file 1 at step 4, thereby creating a second version of the data file. In this example, resource list 3 is appended as resource RSC 128 at the end of file 4.

After the Resource Optimizer has accessed each file required for program execution, and each file has had a resource list created and appended thereto as a separate resource, a separate programmatic element, the Resource Arranger 5, is executed. Resource Arranger 5 recreates a third version of the data file, 6, in resource list order. That is to say, all of the resources stored in data file 4 are recreated as a separate data file, wherein the several resources thereof are stored in resource list order. It will be noted that Resource List RSC 128 is again appended at the end of the optimized file.

Having reference now to Figure 2, the modifications to the application program required to form the Resource Optimizer are discussed. At each instance

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where a program command requires accessing a given resource, e.g.: the GET RESOURCE command of the Macintosh operating system or the FIND, LOAD and LOCK RESOURCE commands of the DOS operating system, a determination is made if the resource accessed by the command is contained in the resource list. If the resource is not contained in the resource list, the resource's type and I.D. number ^{are} ~~is~~ appended to the resource list, and program execution continues to the next GET RESOURCE command. In this manner, the resource list contains a listing of the several resources accessed by the Resource Optimizer 2 in the order in which they are accessed. Each GET RESOURCE command of the Resource Optimizer version of the executable program is similarly modified.

Referring now to Figure 3, the Resource Arranger program is detailed. Resource Arranger 5 accesses the resource list contained as a resource list file type from the version 2 file created by the Resource Optimizer. The Resource Arranger reads each type and I.D. number from the resource list and appends the resource to a third version of the file. This version includes each resource identified by its type and I.D. number in the order in which it was accessed by the Resource Optimizer. Finally, resource list 128 is appended at the end of the Version 3 file.

The preceding invention may be further enhanced. Having continued reference to Figure 2, the modifications discussed therein may be "settable" by means of a flag. If the version of the executable program being executed is the Resource Optimizer version, the flag is set and the previously discussed modifications compiled along with the GET RESOURCE command. If the version of the executable program being executed is the release version of the program, the previously discussed flag is not set, and the modifications are not compiled with the GET RESOURCE commands and hence do not slow execution of the application.

A further modification of the present invention addresses the issue of very small resources, especially small resources which are accessed at many instances during execution of at least a portion of the program, for instance during execution of a subroutine. In this case, very small resources may be removed from the several files in which they are located and rewritten into a separate file or implemented into memory. In many applications programs utilizing the present invention, small resources are normally preloaded into memory. These very small

resources are then left in memory for very rapid access for the duration of at least one subroutine of the application program. In either case, program execution is further enhanced.

5 The previously discussed method may implemented on any of a variety of standard, general purpose, programmable digital computers, or may alternatively be implemented in special purpose hardware. Well known general purpose computers typically include a processor, data storage device, memory, and at least one data bus. Commonly attached to, and operatively associated with such general purpose computers are visual displays, and signal input devices, and mass storage devices. 10 By way of illustration, but not limitation, the general purpose computers suitable for use with the present invention include IBM and compatible systems, Apple Macintosh and compatible systems, and Commodore Amiga systems.

By configuring any general or special purpose computer with software implementing the methodology previously discussed, those computers become apparatus suitable for carrying out the method of the present invention. Again, in 15 illustration but not limitation, an executable program may be input into the memory of the computer system via mass storage device or signal input device. After being so loaded, it may modified to include the Resource Optimizer of the present invention. As the program is executed by the processor, data bus and memory in operative combination, 20

25 The present invention has been particularly shown and described with respect to certain preferred embodiments and features thereof. However, it will be readily apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art that various changes and modifications in form and detail may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the inventions as set forth in the appended claims. The inventions illustratively disclosed herein may be practiced without any element which is not specifically disclosed herein. Alternative programming languages, file descriptions, sub-file descriptions and specific programming commands not identically disclosed herein are specifically contemplated in forming the resource optimizing strategy of the present invention.